

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: DISTINCTIVE PIANISM IN SELECTED WORKS OF
 TWENTIETH-CENTURY RUSSIAN COMPOSERS

 Min-Kyung Choi, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2005

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During the late nineteenth century, Russia produced many accomplished pianists who developed their own pianistic style, the so-called “Russian Piano School.” From that springboard, Russian piano music began to receive international attention and was often included in the repertoire of renowned performers. During the twentieth-century, a number of Russian composers made even greater contributions to the piano-music genre. They tended to develop deeply distinctive and personal musical styles eloquently expressed in the piano works. Likely, these eclectic musical languages are the result of the constant political upheaval in Russia during this time in combination with each composer’s differing reactions and personal circumstances.

I have selected for performance in three recitals a collection of works by twentieth-century Russian and Soviet composers who have made significant contributions to the piano repertoire, including Sergei Rachmaninoff, Nicholai Medtner, Alexander Scriabin, Sergei Prokofiev, Dmitri Shostakovich, Dmitri Kabalevsky, and Rodion Shchedrin. My

selections range from short character pieces to large forms both for solo piano and for piano with orchestra, written between 1891 and 1961. The musical styles and individual characteristics of the selected composers vary, yet always within their Russian commonality. These piano works are often technically demanding, and frequently exhibit pianistic brilliance, highly effective use of sonorities, emphasis on rhythmic figures, unique expression and rich lyricism. They are truly original and can characterize the twentieth-century Russian piano style. They also demonstrate how fully the composers, most of whom were great pianists themselves, understood the idiom of the instrument and how well they were able to maximize its potential.

Through the process of researching, preparing, and performing these three recitals, I was able to gain better insight into the twentieth-century Russian piano repertoire which, I believe, is a great contribution to the piano literature. Exploring their distinctive pianism in these works was a great challenge at first, but it was a most rewarding experience, which really helped me to advance my musical boundary and develop my own pianism to serve great music.

DISTINCTIVE PIANISM IN SELECTED WORKS
OF
TWENTIETH-CENTURY RUSSIAN COMPOSERS

by
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Advisory Committee:

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RECITAL PROGRAM

Program 1

Dmitri Shostakovich	Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 102
Sergei Rachmaninoff	Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 1

Program 2

Sergei Prokofiev	Sarcasms, Op. 17
Alexander Scriabin	Waltz, Op.38 Sonata No. 5, Op. 53
Sergei Rachmaninoff	Variations on a Theme of Corelli, Op. 42
Rodion Shchedrin	Pieces, “ <i>Humoresque</i> ,” “ <i>A la Albeniz</i> ,” and “ <i>Basso Ostinato</i> ”

Program 3

Nicholai Medtner	Fairy Tales Op. 26, No. 1; Op. 20, No. 1; Op. 51, No. 3; Op. 51, No. 1
Sergei Prokofiev	Sonata No. 2, Op.14
Dmitri Kabalevsky	Sonata No. 2, Op. 45